



Mishawaka Communicator



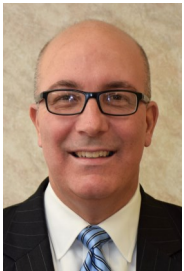
Working together to build the "Best Hometown in America" by delivering exceptional services, promoting safe and clean neighborhoods, elevating the quality of life and inspiring pride in our community.

Dave Wood, Mayor

www.mishawaka.in.gov

September 2019

A Letter from Mayor Dave Wood



One of my top priorities in office has been to upgrade Mishawaka's government, utility and park facilities to maximize efficiency and service potential in an effort to better serve our citizens. We have made great progress in that regard including our consolidated Central Services Facility, new Fire Station #4, the Battell Community Center, and multiple parks. We have more work to do. Some of our glaring needs include a new City Hall, new Mishawaka Utilities Business Office and major upgrades at the Police Department. In fact, we had begun initial planning and discussion toward those goals. Then, out of the blue, an opportunity came along to address multiple issues with one project downtown.

As you may have heard, Liberty Mutual (LM), a fixture downtown since the 1980s, announced they were allowing many of their staff members to work from home and that they would sell their large 95,000 sf building. We had previously been in discussions with representatives from LM to acquire some residual property that they owned for a separate private development. They then reached out to the City to see if we might have an interest in all of their property, including their building. Our initial thought was that the building was ideally located, was very visible, provided some great redevelopment opportunities, but it was simply too big. We then began to think bigger about how we might utilize the building to solve multiple issues simultaneously and quickly realized that we could solve several problems with one great project.

We began a conversation that ultimately led to the City planning to purchase the Liberty Mutual building in Downtown Mishawaka (100 Lincolnway West). As of Monday, August 19th, the Redevelopment Commission, Common Council, and Planning Commission had all held public meetings and voted to acquire the building. Most of the public input we received was very positive. We are currently working on completing a purchase agreement.

So, why should the City acquire the building?

Our existing City Hall located at 600 East Third Street is a conversion of the former Bingham Elementary School that the City purchased in the mid-1980s. Although the building has served us well, we have continually struggled with being located in a residential neighborhood and operating in classrooms. As departments have grown, some have way too little space, others have more than enough. With the block walls of the building it is extremely cost prohibitive to modify the classrooms for small changes. The results are that smaller departments such as the Building Department have moved no less than three times in the last 15 years in an effort to gain and redistribute space to other departments. There are also frequent times when the Council Chambers

(cont'd on next page)

Give Kids A Healthy Start With Easy Breakfasts

Health Information from Saint Joseph Health System

When kids skip breakfast, they miss what they need to be their best in school. According to the Food and Drug Administration, studies show that school children who eat breakfast perform better in the classroom. You may be pressed for time in the morning, but these tips can help you give your kids a great start.

"Make sure breakfast, and meals throughout the day, contain a healthy balance of fruits and vegetables, proteins, grains and dairy," said Dr. Nathaniel Stewart, primary care provider at River Park Family Medicine in South Bend. "Protein such as eggs, nuts, yogurt or a slice of deli meat or cheese helps children feel full and stay focused until lunch." And it doesn't have to be traditional breakfast foods. Your kids may enjoy last night's leftovers.

Short on time? Give kids foods to go, such as a piece of fruit, a bag of trail mix or a whole-wheat tortilla with peanut butter and a carton of milk. Save time by prepping the night before. Chop fruit to add to yogurt or cereal or veggies to add to eggs.

To learn more, visit ThisCounts.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Sep 7 Second Chance Prom
(Battell Center)
- Sep 20 ROC UR BODY
(Central Park)
- Sep 21 80's Color Run
(Central Park)
- Sep 28 Fall Harvestfest
(Central Park)
- Sep 28 Movie In The Park
(Central Park)
- Oct 2 Coffee With A Cop
(Battell Center)
- Oct 5 Wags of Welcome
(Margaret Prickett Park)
- Oct 25 Masquerade at
Castle Manor
(Castle Manor)
- Nov 1 Flannel Formal (21+)
(Central Park)

HALLOWEEN SPOOKTACULAR

Battell Community Center

Haunted House
(\$2 or non-perishable
food item)

Oct 11-13 & 18-20, 7-9pm

Trunk or Treat (Free)
Oct 19th, 5-7pm

Contact Mishawaka Parks
at (574) 258-1664 for details!

ONLINE ACCESS



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A Letter from Mayor Dave Wood *(continued)*

and Board of Public Works room do not have enough seating for the public, and it is standing room only or we have people waiting in the hallway while parking spills out into the streets, preventing residents from parking close to their homes.

Then there is the Mishawaka Utilities Business Office located at 126 North Church Street. That building, constructed in the 1950s, has needed to be replaced for well over 10 years. The building is not ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant. It doesn't have enough lobby space for waiting customers, and there is no privacy for customers when sharing account information. The second floor has a very low ceiling, has inoperable restrooms and can only be used for overflow storage. The roof has had water leakage issues and has just been repaired as minimally necessary to keep it in operation. We have essentially just been waiting for the right opportunity to replace it. When I took office over nine years ago, plans were in place then to merge the Business Office into the Water Division on Jefferson Blvd. I halted those plans believing that the Business Office should remain downtown and ideally, my goal was to combine it with the replacement of City Hall.

The police station was another challenge. Constructed in the 1990s, it's a beautiful facility on the outside and located on perhaps the most valuable property in the Princess City along the riverfront. I've often joked that the Police Chief has the best view in the City, but he should have the worst! Inside, it has a number of systems that are end of life after close to 25 years of service. The roof, HVAC system, and parking lot need complete replacement. The inside needs a complete remodeling and updating but perhaps the biggest issues with the police station are associated with our continued growth of the department and changing needs of the force. When the facility was constructed, it was before much of our wireless capability including having laptops in cars for reporting. We also continue to have a greater percentage of female officers with limited ability to accommodate their needs such as lockers, restrooms and showers. The only way to address these needs at the existing facility would be to do an addition, yet we are landlocked on the existing site. We don't necessarily need more square footage, we just need the square footage we have to serve more efficiently. With more technology, our officers do more reporting in the field meaning they don't need existing desk space. We have a dispatch room that we no longer need and jails that are too large and are not used often. On the flip side, we have a much greater need to have a dedicated training room onsite, a command center, much larger evidence storage area, and sally ports for processing stolen vehicles and for storage of our ever changing fleet of specialized vehicles (motorcycles and ATVs) which were not planned for when the building was constructed.

So, we know we have an overall need for these three facilities but we were not immediately considering replacement or additions given other funding priorities. That's until we were contacted by LM and a great opportunity presented itself.

Before we were willing to commit to the purchase, we hired Alliance Architects to evaluate our existing buildings and needs independent of the Liberty Mutual building. Once our needs were identified, we then had them perform a conceptual layout of the Liberty Mutual building to determine if it would in turn meet the City's needs. Our basic goals in considering the project were as follows:

- **Facilities need to better serve the public!**
- Must be consistent with or accelerate our continued redevelopment efforts.
- Bring the City up to date regarding technology.
- Any solution must provide for some flexibility to allow for growth and changes over time.
- Create a long-term solution.
- Be as efficient as possible on expenditures.

Upon the conclusion of our studies and investigations, we decided that if acquired and renovated, the building would provide a unique opportunity to better serve the public by not only combining three separate buildings into one for efficiency, but it would also better serve the public simply by its unique location. It is directly across the street from the County Services Building and a block away from the public library in the heart of our historic downtown and along the bus route. It also has the ability to open up hundreds of formerly private parking spaces up for public use which is becoming increasingly more critical as we redevelop and bring new events and activities downtown, meaning we can integrate City Hall and the Liberty Mutual building into the downtown in ways that are not currently possible.

Since it was built as a national call center with large open spaces for cubicles, incorporating technology could be easily addressed in the building's renovation. At over 90,000 square feet, the architects estimate that the building is about 5-10% larger than what is currently needed by the City allowing some room for growth over time. The building has a steel structure and masonry exterior. Once windows, HVAC, and roofs are replaced, the building could be set up to serve the City for decades to come without significant capital expenditures. The last issue, and one of the most important, is the cost. As part of the architect's evaluation, the cost estimates for completing the renovation exceeded 14 million dollars. When considering the acquisition costs, the overall project cost started competing with new construction. The City then contracted with NAI Cressy to negotiate the purchase price of the building. The acquisition price agreed to by Liberty Mutual was 2.35 million dollars, well below the appraised value which is just over 5 million dollars. We will pay cash for the building using Tax Increment Finance (TIF) dollars. With this revised purchase price, we felt that our established goals were met, and we decided to move forward with the acquisition. As part of the process, the City Council agreed that the purchase was in the best interest of the City, but also requested that the administration market the building for a brief period of time to see if any other large user would be interested in the building to bring more jobs to the City. Although it is unlikely that another large user would be interested, I agreed to both simultaneously market the building once we have title early next year, as well as continue to prepare plans for a combined City Services building. In future Communicator articles I will let you know more about our plans and marketing efforts as they emerge and as always, we value your input.

Yours in Mishawaka,

